THE CAMPBELLS AND THE CLIFTONS.

A DOMESTIC TALE.

BY MISS META M. DUNCAN.

(Concluded from page 340.)

Mrs. Clifton, at the earnest solicitation of Mrs. John Campbell, had taken up her residence, as usual, with them for the warm weather; and Edward, to be near her, as well as Emily, procured lodgings in the neighborhood.

It was impossible for Edward Clifton not to observe the strong contrast between the homes of the two brothers, domesticated as he was with them. In the one house, all was neatness, cheerfulness, and comfort; in the other, neglect, disorder, and discontent unceasingly prevailed. At John Campbell's plain, but neatly served table, Edward always found a cover laid for him, and a simple, unaffected welcome. At the elder brother's, the meals seemed to be always indefinitely postponed while he remained, and sometimes he received a private intimation from old Nanny that the cook was "off," or in a bad humor, or that the butcher had not come, by way of hint not to stop for dinner.

All this mismanagement and discomfort, Edward, with the blindness of love, attributed to the incompetency and fine-ladyism of Mrs. Frederic Campbell; though, at the other house, he could not fail to observe that Nora was the chief manager in all domestic matters, her mother's health being too delicate to admit of her attending to any active duties herself.

On his return home, Edward had been much struck by Elinor's appearance. His thoughts often recurred to the circumstances which had come to his knowledge while abroad respecting her, and he could not help deploring that one so lovely in person and character should have bestowed her affections upon such a man. The beauty of Elinor had been much increased by the development of her character. Her whole nature was invigorated, and seemed to expand under the pressure of misfortune, and never, since the days of heedless childhood, had she been so gay, animated, and bright as now, when there was a field of action opened to her—a work to be done.

Edward's anxiety on this subject led him to desire some information relative to it. He spoke to Emily of her cousin, of his sense of her increased attractiveness, and of his high opinion of her, and asked her if she knew an officer in the navy named Harvey?

Emily replied that she did.

"He is a lover of Elinor's, is he not?"

"No," replied Emily. "What put that notion into your head?"

"It is no notion, no surmise, Emily. I am certain of it. They are engaged. You must ask me no questions; but, be assured, I am not mistaken."

"Then he is the greatest"——

"Greatest what, Emily?"

"The most artful wretch that ever lived!" continued Emily, warmly.

"Why? Tell me what you know of him. How did you become acquainted with him?"

"We met him in society the winter after you left, and saw a great deal of him; and he must have managed his advances very adroitly to deceive me. I never even suspected that he admired Nora, though they were thrown a great deal together."

"Then it is a secret engagement," said Edward, feeling his high opinion of Elinor oozing away sensibly, never remembering that the woman whom he himself loved was similarly situated.

"Of course it is a secret engagement. I know that my aunt and uncle have no suspicion of anything of the kind. I wonder what they will think of their paragon when they find it out. For my part, I always thought that Nora, with all her prudery, was no better than other people; though I did not think she was so sly as to throw dust in my eyes."

Adversity, and some bitter experience, had diminished very considerably Emily's "sweetness," as well as her refinement; and she dwelt with a degree of acrimony upon her cousin's conduct that her responsibilities in the case scarcely warranted, and which annoyed Edward in secret, though he condemned Nora himself.

Edward's regard for the Campbell family was warm and long cherished. To Mr. and Mrs. John he felt that he owed a deep debt of gratitude, both on his own and his mother's account. In Elinor, also, he took a warm interest; and, as he remembered the affecting charge which he had received from her young brother in his dying moments, he determined, for the first time, to assume a brother's privilege, and speak to her with a gentle warning of what he had heard of her lover. Accordingly, he one morning joined the family at breakfast, proposing to await a favorable opportunity to speak to Nora. Fortunately, she was preparing to set out on a walk to a country store, about a mile distant, on

some household matters, and Edward begged to join her. They walked on in silence for some time, till Edward began to get a little nervous, feeling that he had undertaken an office that was more difficult than he had conceived. When they reached the entrance to a by-path that led to the little dell where Arthur had been wounded, he paused and said—

"Let us go this way, Elinor."

Elinor shrank back; but he continued, saying—

"I have something to speak to you about, and would like to say it here."

Elinor followed him in silence to the spot which she had never visited, save alone, since that fatal day. Edward seated her upon a fragment of rock, and sat down near her.

"Elinor," he said, with an effort at composure, "I believe that you have confidence in me—that you do not doubt my deep interest in you, my sincere regard?"

Elinor's countenance was very pale, and upon it were painted the surprise and varied emotions which filled her at this address, while her large, dark eyes looked troubled and serious. When he ceased, however, she answered, in a low voice—

"I have. I do not doubt you."

"Then, Elinor, I will tell you why I have brought you to this spot. Years ago, when the brother whose memory you revere so truly was leaving us, you remember he asked of me a pledge that I would be a brother to you in his place, if occasion should require it. Heretofore I have never been called upon to redeem that pledge; but now I think the time is come."

Elinor looked up into his face with tearful eyes. She could not speak; but she motioned him to proceed.

"When I was in the Mediterranean last winter, I learned some circumstances connected with a Mr. Harvey of the navy. It is of him I wish to speak."

At the mention of Harvey's name, a crimson glow suffused Elinor's face. Still she said nothing.

"His name was mentioned in connection with yours, Elinor. Indeed, his engagement with you was freely spoken of among his intimates—spoken of in a way offensive to a woman's delicacy, and very wounding to me, feeling, as I do, a brother's sensitiveness in all that concerns you, and I determined, when the opportunity offered, to tell you this, and to say that I feared, inexperienced and confiding as you are, that you had suffered your feelings to be influenced by a man who is not worthy of you. Excuse me, if I pain you; but I feel it my duty, resolved, as I am, to act a brother's part by you, to speak plainly."

Elinor looked up and said, firmly—

"It is a mistake. I know the gentleman you speak of; but no such connection or engagement exists between us. He is but a common acquaintance."

"A common acquaintance!" exclaimed Edward, his trepidation of manner disappearing in a strong feeling of amazement. "Why, Elinor, he exhibits your miniature and your letters, with the signature attached, to his messmates!"

"Did you see them?" asked Elinor, quickly.

"No, I did not see them; but Selby, who is the soul of honor, has seen both, and he assured me of the fact. Selby is a Philadelphian; and, though you are not acquainted, he knows all about your family."

Elinor bent her face to her knees, and her convulsive sobs shook her whole frame. It was pitiable to witness such an agony of distress. Edward was greatly pained, and attempted to soothe her.

"If there exists any entanglement that you regret, dear Nora," he whispered, "confide in me. I will do more than a brother's part. I will guard your feelings, your name, and take all responsibility upon myself. Tell me all."

Elinor lifted up her head with a movement of haughty pride.

"I have nothing to tell," she said; "nothing to regret. It is not consciousness of error that has humbled me thus. I was weak enough to weep at finding you could entertain so poor an opinion of me." And she rose to go with an air of offended dignity.

"But, Elinor," said Edward, surprised, overpowered, and convinced, spite of himself, "what am I to think?"

"Think that I have told you the truth."

"Then you never gave Mr. Harvey your picture, never wrote to him?"

"Never!"

"Then, Elinor, it is proper that a stop should be put to the calumnies of this coxcomb; and, as one who considers himself your brother, I shall do it."

"I empower you to take no such step," said Elinor. "I acknowledge no such claim. Truth will always prevail at last, and I have no fear of consequences." And she left him and returned home, spite of his urgent request to speak with her still farther.

This conversation excited Edward's mind strongly. There were a purity and elevation about Elinor's character that impressed him spite of himself, rendering it almost impossible to doubt her. On the other hand, there was a want of openness, a reserve in all that regarded herself individually, that, while it repelled, left room for doubt. Emily's hints, too, of Elinor's being other than she seemed, influenced him, and he felt thoroughly uncomfortable. Edward would have done well at this time to confide in his mother; but he hesitated, knowing her strong affection for Elinor, to speak of her in the terms he would be obliged to use.

Since his interview with Elinor, she had changed towards him. All that winning softness of manner, which had so much struck him of late, was gone; she was cold, restrained, and evidently troubled.

When Edward's annoyance had reached its extreme point, he unexpectedly heard of the arrival in New York of the vessel in which Mr. Harvey was an officer. Without saying anything of his purpose, farther than a notification to Mrs. Clifton of his intended absence for a few days, he repaired immediately to New York, met and entertained the gentlemen to whose hospitality he had been indebted, and then sought out Mr. Harvey, who replied civilly to his note asking for an interview, and appointed the same evening, in his own rooms at his hotel.

Edward repaired to the meeting at the time appointed, and announced himself as a friend closely connected with the Campbell family, who had called to ask an explanation of some circumstances connected with one of them. He then stated frankly, but firmly, that, while a guest during the past year on board the "Wisconsin," in the absence of Mr. Harvey, he had learned that he represented himself to be engaged to Miss Campbell, whose portrait and letters he was said frequently to have exhibited; that, on his return to Philadelphia, he had mentioned the circumstance to the lady, who asserted that she had nothing more than a common acquaintance with him, and denied ever having written to him or given him her picture.

"She must be the most consummate flirt that ever lived, then," said Harvey, bluntly, and looking very indignant; his after-dinner mood, which savored strongly of champagne, rendering him very communicative. "She swore—no, she didn't swear. What do ladies do? They vow. She vowed she 'd marry me as soon as I came home; and I was just thinking of going to see her when I got your note."

"Excuse me, sir, if I mention that it is necessary I should, for the complete adjustment of this matter, see the miniature and letters alluded to. We are always bound to take a lady's word, unless a gentleman can bring proofs."

"Proofs! Confound it, I can bring plenty of proofs; and, since she is disposed to back out, I don't care how much I expose her."

He arose and went to a writing-desk on a table close by, and took from it a morocco miniature-case and a package of letters. He unclasped the case and looked at it.

"Here," he said, "is the most treacherous little face in the United States. Look at it. 'Man may smile and be a villain,' Shakspeare or some of those fellows say; but I 'll be hanged if they would not have been nearer the mark, if they had said it about woman."

The picture was in Edward's hand; he had been looking at it for several moments. He appeared very composed, but his brain was reeling, and emotion had rendered him speechless. The miniature before him was a beautifully executed portrait of Emily Campbell! not Elinor! At length, he asked, in a tolerably calm voice—

"Did you receive this picture from the hands of the original, sir?"

"Not exactly from her own hands."

"Not exactly!" replied Edward, turning fiercely upon him, and repeating his words. "How, then, sir, did you obtain it? and by what right do you keep possession of a lady's picture unauthorized?"

"I have a great mind not to answer you," replied Harvey, sulkily, his genial mood fast disappearing under the influence of Edward's dictatorial manner. "Though, confound it, she isn't worth a quarrel;" and he threw down a note addressed to himself. "There 's the note which accompanied the picture when she sent it to me," he said. "Read it. I give you leave."

Edward opened the note. It was Emily's hand, and signed by her, and the date was exactly four months after he had parted from her solemnly engaged. He read it. It was a note such as a woman, very much in love, would write to her affianced lover on the eve of a painful separation. Such a note as Emily had never written to him. Edward rose from his chair; his face was very pale, but he was calm.

"I am much indebted to you for the forbearance which you have exercised in this interview, Mr. Harvey, and I owe you an apology, which I hope you will accept. I have been laboring under a mistake. I was misled by a blunder originating in a similarity of names. The lady who disclaimed you as her lover was not Miss *Emily* Campbell." And Edward hastily took his leave.

Edward reached home the afternoon of the following day, and proceeded immediately to seek Emily. He informed her that he had heard all the circumstances of her connection with Mr. Harvey, and that he was aware of her treachery towards himself.

"Who told you?" hastily interrupted Emily, receiving the communication with wonderful coolness. "Was it Nora?"

"No, it was not Nora," replied Edward, remembering, with compunction, how honorably she had submitted to unjust suspicion sooner than betray her cousin; and he told her how he had been informed, reminding her of the mistake under which he had labored, in supposing it to be Elinor.

"It was very foolish in you to suppose," said Emily, coolly, "that I was going to be engaged to you for years, and never flirt during all that time."

"Flirt, Emily! Do you call pledging your vows, bestowing your portrait, and writing passionate love-letters to a man, flirting? Good God! what a perversion of mind! Why, I looked upon you, in my absence, as one who was as much my wife in faith, mind, and affections, as if our vows had been plighted at the altar, and I gave you an equal return. I have seen Mr. Harvey, Emily," he said, after a moment's pause, to stifle his emotion. "I have just returned from New York."

Emily colored, with some faint appearance of

shame; but, immediately recovering herself, she said, proudly—

"To what does all this lead, Mr. Clifton? Am I to understand that you weary of your engagement?"

Edward looked at her in astonishment. The effrontery with which she braved the exposure of her misconduct, and her obtuseness as to its enormity, amazed him.

"You apprehend me right," he said. "It is my wish to sever finally a tie which your own want of faith has virtually broken. I could not say this thus calmly to a woman whom I believed I was injuring; but your affections could never have been mine, or, if mine, they are too easily transferred to make me hesitate in declining them. If, however, you think that there is anything in my conduct which you have not justly earned, I will submit the whole affair to your parents, towards whom I now feel that I have not acted a defensible part, and let them judge between us."

Emily, with extreme haughtiness, said that her wishes coincided entirely with his own, and, deprecating any appeal to her parents, desired that nothing should be said to them on the subject. And thus they parted.

This explanation over, there was one more duty which Edward felt himself called upon to perform, and this was to offer to Nora the humblest apologies for the pain which an unfortunate mistake had led him to give her. As his thoughts carried him back to this scene, and he recalled his offensive suspicions, blacker now a thousandfold that he saw her conduct in its true light, he felt mortified, angry with himself, and not even the remembrance of her indignant allusion to the value which she had placed upon his good opinion could soothe him. The excitement of Edward's mind admitted of no repose. He passed in review every incident connected with his engagement with Emily. He scanned her conduct with an unveiled eye, and it was no alleviation to his sufferings to see her as she was heartless and scheming, guided by no high principle, and the slave of an absorbing vanity that sacrificed everything to its cravings. Wounded in his dearest feelings, humbled in his own opinion, and bitterly disappointed in all his prospects of happiness, he could better have borne to be parted from her forever, with his opinion of her unchanged, than to have had his faith in woman's nature so dispelled.

In this state of mind, he sought Elinor. She received him with the reserve which had marked her manner to him since their interview in the dell; but, when Edward entered upon his explanation, and gave her a history of the whole affair, beginning with his secret engagement with Emily and ending with their final conversation, her manner changed. She received his fervent, heartfelt apologies with emotion, admitted the plausibility of his grounds for suspicion, and offered her thanks for the interest which he had exhibited in her behalf.

"Your intentions," she said, "in speaking to me upon that occasion I did not misconstrue, although, I confess, I was deeply wounded at your low estimate of my character."

"But why, Elinor, when a word from you would have explained the whole thing—for you say you were not ignorant of Emily's regard for Harvey—why did you not speak? You owed it to yourself, for the exoneration of your own character."

Elinor blushed vividly, and answered with painful embarrassment—

"I was aware—I suspected the state of things between you and Emily. Could I tell what I knew must alienate you?"

"And you thought so much of your cousin, so little of me, Elinor, that you suffered me to continue a tool for the convenience of a heartless coquette! Was this kind, Elinor? Was it just?"

Elinor's lip quivered; she was unused to such scenes, and could scarcely control the confusion and agitation of her mind. A vague distrust of herself, a trembling fear that a sense of honor towards Emily, and regard for her happiness, had not wholly influenced her, impelled her to silence.

"I did what I thought best," she said, at length, in a broken voice. "I thought that time—that Emily—that you yourself, perhaps—I saw that she was unworthy of you. If I had spoken, she would have suspected—my motives, I mean, might have been misconstrued." Here Elinor's voice became inaudible, and she turned her agitated countenance away, veiling her eyes with her hand, unable to proceed.

Edward rose and walked rapidly across the floor. He saw that there was some secret feeling connected with himself that caused Elinor's emotion; some suffering, perhaps—some wounded delicacy, brought about by the malevolence or temper of others. His vanity, but recently so rudely shocked, admitted, but for an instant, the dangerous flattery which it might have suggested. His self-complacency was annihilated, and he repelled the presumptuous thought with scorn, and the vision disappeared. Not so its effects. He returned to Elinor's side, and, taking her hand, said—

"I am going away, Elinor; I may not see you again for a long time. But, before I go, I wish to assure you that I acquit you of all blame in this sad affair. As you say, 'you did all for the best,' and I offer you my humblest apologies for the wrong I did you in suspecting you of anything that was not noble and upright, as you are. You must think of me kindly, affectionately, Nora, when I am gone, and sometimes send me a message by mamma." He raised her hand to his lips, kissed it once, twice, and left her.

Nora's head sank upon the table beside her, and she gave way unrestrainedly to her emotions so long pent up.

In a hurried farewell interview with Mrs. Clifton, Edward briefly explained to her his past and present

position with regard to Emily. He touched as lightly as possible upon her misconduct, and begged his mother to consider this communication, which he felt that he owed to her, one of strict confidence.

Ere Edward reached New Orleans, letters of an urgent and distressing character had been forwarded to him. His uncle was lying dangerously ill; and, on his arrival, he learned that his end was hourly expected. A heavy stupor, in which Mr. Fairly had lain for many hours, passed off about this time; he recognized Edward, who sat beside him, and stretched out his hand to him. Edward took it, and, with much feeling, bent over the dying man.

"Kiss me, Edward," he said. Edward did so. "Now raise me up. You are a good man, Edward. I am glad I have been spared to see you. I have left you all. Don't stay here. Go home and take care of your mother." His voice failed him, and, in a few hours, he was no more. When the will was opened, with the exception of a few trifling bequests, Edward was declared sole heir to all his uncle's vast possessions. The will also contained a request that he would, as soon as possible, wind up the affairs of the firm, and retire from business.

Edward's attachment to his uncle, founded in the best feelings of our nature, was strong and tender, and he felt his loss sensibly; but the shock which his mind had so recently sustained, and the embittered feelings which it had produced, left more lasting and depressing effects, rendering his sudden acquisition of wealth scarcely a matter of congratulation to him. The first letter to Mrs. Clifton after his loss breathed only this spirit, and she wrote to entreat him to conclude his business speedily and return to her. This, however, could not be done so easily as she supposed; and the long weary winter passed over, and he was still unable to fix a time for his return.

Meanwhile, things were not standing still at the North. Mr. Harvey came to Philadelphia. He was characteristically shocked when he discovered the overthrow of Mr. Campbell's fortunes, and assured Emily in good faith "that he thought it was very hard upon her." At the end of three weeks, not having repeated his visit, he made no demur at the demand which Emily made for her portrait and letters, "those fatal tell-tales," she said, "but for which she might now have been the mistress of Edward Clifton's large fortune." Being rather depressed by the dullness of home, and the total extinction of too promising love affairs, Emily accepted the invitation of one of her former schoolmates, who resided in Baltimore, to make her "a long visit." Here, in a new field, her sweetness returned, and she was again a belle, followed, flattered, and admired.

Late in the spring, Mrs. Clifton was seized with a dangerous illness. When her life was threatened, Edward was written to; but the important change for good or ill must take place ere he could reach Philadelphia. Mrs. John Campbell and Elinor remained with Mrs. Clifton while in this critical state; and Elinor was, throughout her illness, her untiring and efficient nurse.

Mrs. Clifton lingered many anxious days on the verge of the grave. At length, the native strength of her constitution conquered, and she became convalescent. The weather was now unusually warm for the season, and the physicians considering the pure air of the country necessary for her complete restoration, she was removed to Clover Hill, where, under the care of her kind friends, she improved rapidly.

Edward arrived soon after her removal to the country. He had feared the worst; and his joy, in finding his mother recovering, overflowed in kind deeds and words of affection to all around.

"I mean to be head nurse myself hereafter," said Edward one morning, a few days after his return, as he smoothed down Mrs. Clifton's sofa pillows; "nothing is to part us now. The Siamese twins are not more inseparable than we shall be."

"You have a powerful rival, Edward," said Mrs. Clifton, with a gentle caress. "Nora has been everything to me in my illness that nurse, friend, or comforter could be, and you will find it difficult to depose her."

"Then I must apply for some other office about your person. I can never be jealous of Nora. I know I can trust her." Edward began his remark laughingly, but as he concluded it, his countenance changed, and his eye turned full of seriousness to Nora, who was sitting close by employed with her needle.

Nora caught the glance, and, as she bent over her work, she said, mentally, "He has not forgotten the past, though outwardly he appears so gay and cheerful."

Edward had seen Emily, who was again at home, several times since his arrival. She always appeared when he called at her father's, where his visits, though few, could not, in consideration of past acts of kindness, be omitted entirely. She received him with an ease and cordiality that, while it startled Edward, afforded the strongest proof of her entire want of sensibility, and enabled him soon to meet her with equal composure.

Edward had a little matter upon his mind which troubled him. In the custom house, a box belonging to him had been lying for many months. It contained cameos, mosaics, and other works of art and taste, some of them very costly, which he had picked up abroad. Most of them had been intended for Emily; but the box did not arrive till after their connection ceased. He now wished to give them to Elinor, but knew not whether she would accept them. In the frankness of his nature, he one day told her the whole story, and begged her to say that she would receive them.

"Give me what you originally intended for me,"

she replied, "and let Mrs. Clifton keep the rest for you. You may find a use for them some day."

Edward understood her allusion, but made no reply. The next day Elinor received a packet containing many articles of great beauty and value. Whether Edward had implicitly followed her advice in the division, the impartial reader must decide for herself.

The summer passed on serenely, happily. Edward occupied his old lodgings; but the greater part of his time was spent at Mr. John Campbell's. "He was indulging himself in a holiday," he said, "before settling down into some decided pursuit." Nevertheless, as an idle man, he was at everybody's service. He read to the ladies, and sometimes drove Mrs. Clifton out. He helped the little boys with their lessons, and did all Mrs. John's errands in town. He walked occasionally with Elinor, helped her in the garden, or in any little matter that turned up, when she would permit him. A favorite method of getting over time, with him, was to loiter about the piazza with a book after breakfast, while Elinor was engaged in the little breakfast-room adjoining the kitchen, busied with her household cares. He assisted in this way, lounging at the window, sometimes reading, sometimes talking, and sometimes only looking at the washing of the breakfast cups, the compounding of puddings, the making of cakes, weighing of groceries, and various other domestic labors; and, in preserving-time, achieved wonders, in his own opinion, in the way of pasting up and labeling jars of sweetmeats, the praises which he lavished upon himself being called for, he said, by the want of gratitude in his employer.

"I must begin soon to think of returning to town, Edward," said Mrs. Clifton, one day, the changing foliage warning her that cold weather would soon be upon them.

"Don't you think we could get some nice little cottage in this neighborhood?" replied Edward. "You are so well here; and you will miss Mrs. Campbell so much when you go home. For my part, I think it is very pleasant here."

Mrs. Clifton shook her head and smiled, and then said, gravely—

"It would be very dreary for me in the country in the winter. When the weather is inclement, and the roads bad, I should see little more of the Campbells than I do in town. Besides, how should I get to church?"

Edward said no more; he knew how dear to her were her own pastor and her own church, and how true was all she said. He felt very dull, however, very dispirited, and he set out to take a long walk. On his return, being fatigued and heated, Edward threw himself upon a sofa in the wide, old-fashioned hall, and soon fell into a doze. It was quite dark when he was aroused by a heavy footstep. The parlor door opened, and, by the light that streamed through it, he perceived old Nanny Foster descending the stairs. Elinor, who had opened the door spoke a few words to her, and was about to retire, when the old woman arrested her steps.

"Stop, Miss Elinor," she said, "I want to say something to you. You know I always speak my mind. I 've knowed you since you was a baby, and always did it, and shall do it now. I think, miss, you are behaving very *mean* to your cousin. You know very well that Mr. Edward Clifton is in love with Miss Emily, and wanted to marry her, till he got jealous of her. Now, sich love tiffs as these soon pass over, if nobody stands in the way of lovyers, keeping them apart; and, I am sorry to say, I think you are doing that very thing! Mr. Edward is very rich, to be sure, and a great match; but it isn't honurble for a lady, 'specially sich quality as you are, to be standing in the way of another person, who has a better right to him."

Elinor was so astounded by this attack that, for a few moments, she could not collect herself. When she did so, she retired without a word, and closed the door. But the indomitable old woman was not to be thus quietly put down. She opened the parlor door, and, obtruding her hard, sharp visage into the room, said—

"I don't know where you got your manners, miss, to shut the door in the face of a decent body that nursed you when you was a baby. But I 'll tell you my mind, for all that. You 're in love with Mr. Edward yourself, I s'pose; but, I can tell you, you won't git him. He 'll marry Miss Emily yet."

A hand was laid on Nanny's shoulder; she turned, and disappeared like a snow-wreath.

Edward entered the room, closed the door, and approached Nora. She was trembling like a leaf. He seated her upon the sofa, and said, kindly—

"Why suffer the insolence of that coarse and ignorant old woman to distress you thus, Nora?"

Nora could not speak; her voice was choked, and tears began to fall.

Edward sat by her quietly some minutes, till she was more calm, and then said—

"Nora, I was asleep on the sofa in the hall when Nanny aroused me. I overheard what she said; and we must overlook her impertinence, in honor of the faithful creature's motives. The tigress is not truer to her cubs than this poor woman is to the children whom she has served all their lives. With regard to myself," he said, his voice getting a little husky, "I must say that she is altogether wrong in her surmises. I do not love Emily; I have long ceased even to respect her. When I examine the feelings which now fill my whole heart for another, I doubt whether I ever did love her. Elinor, listen to me; look at me. I know that I cannot recommend myself to you as I might once have done. I cannot ask you for the priceless gift of your affections at present. I can only pray you to listen to me with indulgence, and to subject me to any period of probation you choose; but do not plunge me into de-

spair by a cold denial. Give me time; let me show you how truly, how fervently I love you! Let me redeem myself in your opinion. Speak to me, dear Nora, and give me a little hope."

Elinor's countenance had been deadly pale for some time. It now flushed to a deep crimson, and her drooping lids veiled her eyes. Edward took her hand and kissed it. It remained passive in his. He drew her head upon his shoulder, and a shower of bright tears rained from those tender eyes.

It was never known to the veracious narrator of this history whether Elinor made any reply to the vehement pleadings of her lover. There is a sort of magnetism, however, between people thus situated which the uninitiated cannot understand, and which is an admirable substitute for words. One fact is ascertained; Edward never complained of the taciturnity of the lady of his love, and, before twenty-four hours were over, he made an authorized application to her father for her hand, which application, we may add, was favorably received.

The joy of Mrs. Clifton at this realization of her dearest hopes may be conceived. The chagrin of old Nanny may also be left to the imagination of the reader. Luckily for her peace of mind ever after, she never knew that her own act had precipitated the event which she so much deplored.

As for Emily, she was unable to conceal her mortification when her cousin's engagement was announced. She had no affection to disappoint; but her pride, vanity, and ambition were all deeply wounded, and she soon took occasion to make another visit to Baltimore. In less than two months after her departure, Mrs. Frederic Campbell was moving mountains to prepare for her an adequate bridal outfit. Emily's intended husband was altogether an unexceptionable person. He was a good deal older than herself, to be sure; but what did that matter? He was very rich, and had a fine house and several carriages. Among the numerous sources of satisfaction to Emily, in this connection, was the triumph of being married before her cousin. Her wedding was solemnized with great *éclat;* she drove from church in her own carriage, and, in a few weeks, embarked for Europe, where, at the last accounts, she is represented to be as remarkable for the admiration which she attracts, as for the jealousy which she excites in her husband, who, a victim to paralysis, sojourns with his brilliant wife in every capital in Europe, and finds happiness and repose nowhere. Rumor says that Emily's infant, which was left in Paris with a French nurse, is dead; but, as she has never exhibited any signs of mourning, the charitable doubt the report.

The marriage of Edward and Elinor took place in a few months. The love which Edward bore his wife was equaled by the reverence which he felt for the mother who had trained her up, and given her those high principles and domestic virtues which made her the charm, the stay, the comfort of his home. He felt that he was supremely blest; and no happier day ever dawned than that which united, by an indissoluble tie, the two families of Campbell and Clifton.

THE DARK CLOSET.

A STORY FOR MOTHERS.

BY MRS. SARAH J. HALE.

It is terrible to strive with an accusing conscience! I have tried to overcome my remorse by reflecting that what I had done was done, and could not be altered. I have tried to stifle my anguish by prayers, to atone for my crime by tears. All has been vain, because all has been selfish.

I will make one more effort: I will try confession. Yes, I will confess not to Heaven only, but to earth. This humiliation may be blessed. Perhaps it may save some mother from errors like mine; from sorrows like mine: I shall not then have suffered in vain!

I must give a sketch of my own history, in order to make my confession fully understood. I do this, not with a view to palliate my faults while acknowledging them. No; my sins are great, and not easily excused; but I know what none besides can, the causes which have made me thus capricious and erring. And, while I confess my errors, shall I not also expose their causes? It is the only way in which I can hope my story may be of advantage to others. It would otherwise be like a warning of danger, without showing any way of escape—it might terrify, it would not enlighten or improve.

I trace all my errors of feeling and conduct to the errors of my early education. I was an only child. My father was devoted to his business, and paid little attention to my training. He only called me to him to give me some pretty plaything, or dainty, and I liked him because of these pretty and nice things he brought me. When my humors and appetites were gratified, I was fond of him and glad to see him; at other times, I felt no more affection for him than for the cook; for she, too, pampered my appetite with all sweet and savory articles of food. My father never taught me; and I cannot now recall any early associations or ideas which rested on him for their origin. He had no moral power over my heart and mind.